



Testimony of Jill Holmes Brown
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Integrated Health Services Inc.
Board Chair CASBHC (Connecticut Association of School Based Health Center)
H.B. No. 6659 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE
BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2025

February 28, 2023

Good morning; Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Berthel, Representative Nuccio and respected Members of the Appropriations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony on the children's mental health bill.

I would like to thank you and the Governor for the recognition of School Based Health Centers and the vital role they play in providing care to kids in CT. I would urge you to support not only restoring funding but increased funding for the School Based Health Centers (SBHCs) in Connecticut. The lens in which we approach this is critical as we take this vital opportunity to provide medical, mental health and dental services to children across our state.

School-Based Health Centers provide integrated, medical, dental and mental health care.

Removing the barriers to access care on site in the school allows for easier follow-ups and for a trusted relationship between students and teachers and families.

SBHCs allow students to stay in school and not miss any seat time, while their parents can remain at work, and their teachers can focus on their students' classroom and educational needs.

During COVID we were able to very quickly implement telehealth as a platform to provide services and continue to offer much needed physical exams, immunizations and mental health services. The pandemic made it clearer how imperative SBHC's are to our students.

It is especially important to note that these centers provide barrier-free access to care for children and eliminate challenges presented by transportation, and parents schedules.

SBHC's utilize evidence-based screening tools

SBHC's utilize quality measures for service delivery

SBHC's data shows decrease in absenteeism

SBHC's operate under HIPAA not FERPA

SBHC's bill and receive reimbursement through DSS and private insurance

SBHC's provide telehealth

SBHC's have Electronic Health Records

SBHC's have the resources and tools available

SBHC's deliver equitable and accessible services

SBHC's get to the root cause



SBHC's are at the forefront of providing medical and mental health care for students. Early identification, support and treatment can impact the trajectory of student's mental health and decrease the stigma of mental health. SBHC's data continually has shown to contribute to decreased school absenteeism by providing medical, dental and mental health care for our children in their schools.

It is very important that qualified medical and mental health professionals provide these much-needed therapeutic services as this critical services need to happen in the right environment and conditions, for children and their families.

Mental health professionals have been severely underpaid for years, it takes 8 years to become a licensed clinical social worker or a marriage and family therapist. The overwhelming amount of need has created significant competition within the state. In order to keep these valued and trusted relationships, SBHC's and all those that employ mental health workers are going to need to be competitive, so SBHC's are in desperate need of increases.

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Thank you for your consideration. Jill Holmes Brown, LCSW Chief Operating Officer
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